The Carlson Leadership & Public Service Center develops service-learning, community-based participatory research, and service opportunities for UW students that sustain reciprocal partnerships, deepen learning, advance civic leadership, and contribute to our greater community.
Overview

During the 2013-2014 academic year, the University of Washington Carlson Center worked to connect 3,178 students in 105 courses to service-learning opportunities.

- Students worked with more than 420 community partners, engaging in a wide variety of non-profit and public sector activities.
- Students completed over 63,560 hours\(^1\) of service through their service-learning courses.
- The estimated net worth of student service hours totaled \$1,698,323.20\(^2\).

The number of students participating in service-learning represents a strong continuation of the number of students participating in the 2013-2014 year. It is representative of the consistent increase of capacity and utilization of Carlson Center opportunities since 2008.

\(^{1}\) Assuming each student completes 20 hours (the minimum service-learning requirement)

\(^{2}\) Independent Sector estimates an hour of volunteer service in Washington state to be worth $26.72

https://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time
**Service-Learning Assessment**

To continue to improve the experience of service-learning for our students, the Carlson Center administers a survey to all of our service-learners at the end of each quarter to evaluate the performance of the Carlson Center, community partners, and the service-learning course experience as a whole. For the 2013-2014 academic year 65.54% (n=2083) of students who participated in service-learning responded to the survey. **An overwhelming 92.27% stated they would recommend service-learning to their fellow students.** Our data was collected via an online survey distributed to all service-learning participants after the completion of each service-learning course. Questions were in either yes/no or 1-to-5 rating scale format, or provided space for qualitative information about the students’ experience. Questions focused on academic course and service-learning integration, students’ assessment of the effectiveness of the Carlson Center in setting up and supporting service-learning opportunities, experience with their community partner organization, and a qualitative section on overall experience.

**Service-Learning Courses**

Students participated in 105 service-learning classes over the course of the 2013-2014 academic year. Courses included all levels of undergraduate academics and topic areas. Service-learning placements were matched to course-content prior to students selecting their placements.

**Student Satisfaction with Course’s Service-Learning**

![Graph showing student satisfaction with service-learning](image)
Strengths repeatedly cited by students centered around the opportunity for reflection that is built into the service-learning experience. By combining service-learning with the classroom experience, students felt they were able gain a more complete understanding of how concepts function in a real-world setting, and build a personal context for connecting theory and practice.

It allows you to see what you’re learning in lectures in real life. It makes the course material much more substantial, and the issues more urgent.

-Student, Sociology 292: Public Schools in America

Service-learning gives you the opportunity to see the concepts you learn in the classroom come to life in the real world. It’s where the rubber hits the road, where you’re not only applying your knowledge but cultivating those interpersonal and communication skills that are necessary as well.

-Student, Sociology 201: The City

Service-learning allows the time, space, and experience for us to take the theoretical, philosophical, and sometimes intangible phenomena that we learn about in our classes and render it practical, accessible, and real.

-Student, History 249/Political Science 249/Sociology 266: Labor Studies
Student Satisfaction with Community Partner Experience

- There were ample opportunities to contribute significantly to the mission of the organization: 4.10
- The supervision from the organization while on site was adequate: 4.26
- There was strong communication from the organization supervisor/staff while on and off the site: 4.12
- I believe the Carlson Center should continue to partner with this organization: 4.55
- I was satisfied with the volunteer portion of my service-learning experience: 4.40

Leading Factors in Students’ Community Organization Selection

- Location or Ease of Access: 20%
- Career Exploration: 12%
- Desire to Volunteer with Friends: 18%
- Position Times or Schedule: 10%
- Mission of the Organization: 16%
- Description of the Position: 3%
- Skill-Building: 21%
Students Reflect on Service-Learning

It has been the highlight of my college career thus far! Seriously, I never knew "volunteering" for an organization could be so fun, let alone one that you learn so much about the environment in!

-Student, Program on the Environment 100: Environmental Foundations

It sounds cliché, but I learned so much about myself and really broadened my perception of my surroundings. I think that exposure is one of the best ways to address stereotypes, and I was really surprised by how much. I felt a certain level of discomfort when I started, but I think that is exactly what made me think more critically about my position in society, which was the goal of my service-learning.

-Student, Geology 432/Honors 232: Politics of Poverty and Privilege

I always tell people that service-learning has been one of the greatest experiences during college. It gave me the opportunity to explore the community and get out of the traditional college schedule of just taking classes. I believe that it helped reinforce the topics I was learning about by allowing me to explore and experience things personally.

-Student, Early Childhood and Family Studies 456: Senior Project
Working with the Carlson Center

The Carlson Center works to facilitate the entire service-learning experience. Of the 2083 respondents, **31.54% of students contacted the Carlson Center by phone, email, or in person** (657 students). Students who contacted the Carlson Center generally had a more positive experience with the Carlson Center and found communications from the Carlson Center about their service-learning placements more useful.

Student Satisfaction with the Carlson Center

Many students credited the Carlson Center with playing a key role in connecting them to new opportunities and giving crucial assistance in locating a wide range of service opportunities.

*It’s a great opportunity to volunteer and through the Carlson Center it’s SUPER easy to sign up. For me half the battle for volunteering is the initial start up.*

- Student, American Ethnic Studies 340: Race, Ethnicity and Education
Room for Growth

Generally, responses to surveys highlighted several areas where there is room for growth.

- Students reported logistical difficulties in getting to and from service-learning sites.
- Responses showed a general trend highlighting lower satisfaction among participants in 100-level courses and rising satisfaction among participants in higher-level courses.
- Students also reported a need for greater communication between their placement and the Carlson Center.

Would You Recommend Service-Learning?

92.27% of respondents would recommend service-learning to another student. Students found value in service-learning for a variety of different reasons. Among the most popular were the experiences of community engagement, influence and skill-building for future careers, networking, and adding real world context to course material.

I would tell the student that it is an amazing opportunity to learn and grow as an individual and professional. It was nice to step out of the nursing role for a couple hours a week and connect with people on more of an individual level. I was able to connect with developmentally delayed and disabled people who I have had no previous experience with. This experience will help me in my future.

- Student, Nursing 412: Health Care Systems

It is a great way to get a little exposure into a career path that might be of interest without being too committed to it. I am very busy working while attending school at the same time but I found so much value in making the time for volunteering.

- Student, Early Childhood and Family Studies 456: Senior Project
**Final Thoughts**

Students report that the service-learning program administered by the Carlson Center offers a successful entry point into community involvement for almost all of its participants. Students felt that service-learning offered them valuable context and experience that correlated well with their course material. Student comments largely reflect that the experience was both personally rewarding and enhanced their understanding of theoretical course material.

> Service-learning is a fantastic way to broaden your scope of the world and to see and start to build empathy for those who have vastly different experiences in this world. It has changed my perspective in so many different and unexpected ways. My service-learning has been such a fantastic learning experience.
>
> -Student, Gender, Women, & Sexuality Studies 200: Introduction to Women Studies

> You will learn and feel more engaged in the class if you participate in service-learning. I honestly gain the most out of school when I’m taking a class that has an incorporated service-learning aspect. It is the best way to learn.
>
> -Student, American Ethnic Studies 340: Race, Ethnicity and Education
Appendix

Questions from Student Evaluation Survey

Carlson Center Questions

After the initial class presentation by the Carlson Center, did you contact the Carlson Center or come into the Carlson Center office? (Yes or No)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (1 Strongly Disagree- 5 Strongly Agree):

Communication from the Carlson Center staff (via email, phone or in person) was helpful.

The Carlson Center was effective in problem solving my service-learning position.

The presentation by the Carlson center during the first week of class was valuable.

Emails sent throughout the quarter from the Carlson Center were informative.

I was satisfied with the overall support I received from the Carlson Center throughout the quarter.

Community Organization Questions

Was your service-learning site a Self Placement? (Yes or No)

Select the Name of your service-learning organization (Select from list)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (1 Strongly Disagree- 5 Strongly Agree):

When viewing service-learning opportunities matched with the course, there was a wide variety of organizations to choose from.

The organization descriptions on the registration website were informative.

Your position on the registration website accurately depicted the work you did at your service-learning site.

From the following eight factors, please select which factors were most important to you when choosing a service-learning position. Please choose at least one. (Population the organization serves, Mission of the organization, Description of the position, Career exploration, Skill-building, Position times or schedule, Location or ease of access, Desire to volunteer with friends)
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (1 Strongly Disagree- 5 Strongly Agree):

The orientation/training at my service-learning site from the supervisor was useful.

There were ample opportunities to contribute significantly to the mission of the organization.

The supervision from the organization was adequate.

There was strong communication from the organization supervisor/staff while on and off the site.

I believe that the Carlson Center should continue to partner with this organization.

I was satisfied with the volunteer portion of my service-learning experience.

My service-learning experience changed the way I view the social issue that my service-learning site addresses.

Course Questions

For how many classes did you participate in service-learning during this quarter? (1 or 2)

In which service-learning course were you enrolled? (Select from list)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

I have learned more in this class than I would have if I had not participated in a service experience.

My service experience helped me to understand the relevance of this course’s subject matter in everyday life.

I was satisfied with the inclusion of service-learning in this course.

Based on my experience in this course, I believe more courses at the University of Washington should incorporate a service-learning component.

My service-learning experience in this course will have an impact on my future academic and career choices.

Other Questions

Prior to your service-learning class this quarter, have you previously participated in a volunteer experience? (Yes or No)

Prior to your service-learning class this quarter, have you previously taken a service learning class in a college setting (UW or other)?
Do you have any additional comments regarding your experience with the Carlson Center, your volunteer site, or your course?

Would you recommend service-learning to another student? (Yes or No)

Why or why not? What would you tell them about service-learning?

How could your service-learning experience have been improved?

Do you have any additional comments regarding your experience working with the Carlson Center, your service-learning organization, or your service-learning course?

Can the Carlson Center contact you to further discuss your service-learning experience? (Yes or No)